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BRITISH COLUMBIA

AND

VANCOUVER ISLAND,

By J. S. KNEVETT.

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

ANNUAL REPORT

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BRITISH COLUMBIA AND VANCOUVER ISLAND.

By J. S. KNEVETT.

WE cannot introduce the reader to the subject of this "Pioneer" paper better than by quoting the opinion of the most distinguished, impartial, and highly cultured critic that has ever visited the province—Lord Dufferin, the present Governor-General of Canada. After traversing British Columbia from its southernmost point to Alaska, he said, in his speech at Victoria on the 20th September, 1876, "I may frankly tell you that I think British Columbia *a glorious province*, which Canada should be proud to possess, and whose association with the Dominion she ought to regard as the crowning triumph of confederation. Such a spectacle as its coast line presents is not to be paralleled by any country in the world. Day after day, for a whole week, in a vessel of nearly 3,000 tons, we threaded an interminable labyrinth of watery reaches, that wound endlessly in and out of a network of islands, promontories, and peninsulas, for thousands of miles, unruffled by the slightest swell from the adjoining ocean, and presenting at every turn an ever-shifting combination of rock, verdure, forest, glacier, and snowcapped mountains of unrivalled grandeur and beauty.

"One is lost in admiration at the facilities for inter-communication which are thus provided for the future inhabitants of this wonderful region."

After describing the varied incidents of his tour Lord Dufferin says, "We proceeded up the valley of the Fraser, where the river has cloven its way through the granite ridges and bulwarks of the Cascade Range, and along a road of such admirable construction that does the greatest credit to the able administrator who directed its execution. Passing thence into the open valleys and rounded eminences beyond, we had an opportunity of appreciating the pastoral resources and agricultural capabilities of what is known as the bunch grass country," which, further on, he describes as an "almost interminable prospect of grazing lands and valleys susceptible of cultivation."

POSITION AND EXTENT OF THE PROVINCE.—British Columbia is bounded on the south by the 49th parallel (dividing it from the United States), on the north by Alaska, on the east by the Rocky Mountains, which separate it from the great North-West Territory of Canada, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean.

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The Province may be considered as being divided into three distinct parts—the islands of Vancouver, Queen Charlotte, and the innumerable smaller islands, forming the first ; the region west of the Cascade Mountains the second, and the region east of the Cascades, the third division.

CLIMATE.—Vancouver and the other islands have a climate resembling that of Great Britain in almost every particular. The crops are usually sown, reaped, and housed with fine weather. Snow neither falls heavily nor lies long. In general, the summers are dry and warm, and the winters open and wet. The absence of thunderstorms is a remarkable fact. The rainfall in the West Cascade region is greater than that of England, being 62.33 in 1874. There are no extremes of heat or cold, malaria and ague being unknown.

In the region east of the Cascades the climate is quite different. The heat and cold are more intense, it being almost continuously hot in summer, and the mercury freezing in winter. As rain falls but rarely, irrigation is required. The dryness of the atmosphere near the head waters of the Columbia river, and the romantic nature of the scenery, render it a most favourable residence for consumptive patients, and several cures of this formidable disease have been effected by the genial properties of the climate.

POPULATION.—INDIANS.—The whites, who are mostly English, and Canadians, are estimated at about 20,000 ; coloured, 750 ; and Chinamen, 1,500. The Indians, who are very quiet and useful, number about 30,000 ; but as, from a combination of causes, they are rapidly decreasing, this estimate is probably wide of the mark. In all, the population may be considered to be 52,000. Victoria, which is the capital, contains over 5,000 white inhabitants, according to the census of 1876.

GOVERNMENT AND LAWS.—The province forms part of the Dominion of Canada, and sends representatives, chosen by the people, to the House of Commons at Ottawa. As regards provincial matters, there is a Lieutenant-Governor (Hon. Mr. Richards) and a Legislative Assembly, the members of which are elected for four years by the voters ; and three or four of the representatives constitute the Ministry. Any man who has the confidence of the electors, no matter what his social position may be, may become a candidate for political honours. The members are paid about 100*l.* per annum for their services during the session, which rarely lasts more than eight weeks. The laws are just and founded upon those of England. The franchise is open to all British subjects. Municipalities choose their own Mayor and Council, and manage their own affairs. The administration of justice is in marked contrast to the lawlessness which exists in some of the adjoining States of the Union. Life and property are as secure as in England. Indians and whites are equal in the eye of the law. It is principally owing to the personal character and exertions of Sir Mathew Bailey Begbie, the Chief Justice of Columbia, assisted by com-

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petent judges, that such a praiseworthy state of affairs exists. Even at the gold mines "rowdiness" is almost unknown.

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS.—The principal article of export is gold, \$38,166,970 having been exported from 1858 to 1875. Next in importance comes lumber (sawn timber), coal, furs, fish, canned salmon, fish-oil, wool, cranberries, and hops. The total value of exports during the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1875, amounted to \$2,824,812, and of imports, \$2,543,502, showing an increase over the preceding year of \$704,188 in the exports, and \$457,942 in the imports; the latter increased still further in 1876, amounting to \$3,118,597. It will thus be seen that whilst depression of trade has affected the rest of America, the value of dutiable goods imported into British Columbia during the year 1876 shows an increase of some \$300,000 over the preceding year. It is most satisfactory to observe that the volume of trade is constantly on the increase, and the balance is in favour of the province.

SAVINGS BANKS AND POST OFFICES.—There are Dominion Government savings banks at Victoria, New Westminster, and Nanaimo, where deposits from one dollar to any amount may be made. Interest at 5 per cent. per annum is added to the principal on the 30th of June, and the money may be withdrawn at any time on demand up to 20%, and at seven days' notice, for any sum above that amount. Immigrants should put their money into one of the banks on arrival. The security is absolute, as they are directly under the control of the Canadian Government.

There are about forty post-offices in the Province, and the postage is 1½d. for local and Canadian, and 2½d. for English letters. Nearly every outlying settlement has an office.

Telegraphic communication is established between the most important towns, and news is received from London *via* New York daily.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION.—On Vancouver Island, especially in the neighbourhood of Victoria, the roads are numerous and excellent, being kept in good condition by the Government; on the mainland, the great trunk road of the province, starting from opposite New Westminster, and running a distance of about 500 miles into the interior, and the numerous bye-roads and trails, are superior to most colonial roads. The sum of nearly half a million pounds sterling has been expended on bridges and roads during the last eighteen years, and the work of opening up the country is being prosecuted with vigour.

Stage coaches run weekly from Yale to Barkerville, Cariboo, and also from Cache Creek to Okanagan.

Steamers go regularly twice a week from Victoria to New Westminster, and stern-wheel steamers thence to Yale.

A Government steamer goes weekly to Cowichan, Maple Bay, Admiral Island, Chemainus, and Nanaimo, and fortnightly to Comox from Victoria, and a second steamer runs along the

East Coast of the island occasionally. There is also steam communication between New Westminster and Nanaimo.

FREE HOMESTEADS AND THE LAND LAWS.—By the Homestead Act, the farm and buildings, when registered, cannot be taken for debt incurred after the registration; it is free up to the value of 500*l.*; goods and chattels are also free up to 100*l.*

Heads of families, widows, or single men of eighteen years, and upwards, may obtain free grants of 320 acres east of the Cascades, and 160 acres in any other part of the province. Maps of the surveyed lands are open to inspection at the District Land offices, and the immigrant can select his own land, record it at the office, and enter on it at once. After two years, on complying with the regulations as to cultivation and improvements, a Crown grant will be issued, conveying it to the pre-emptor. The total cost is about thirty shillings. No one need suffer from "land-hunger" in British Columbia.

If required, the land can be purchased outright at the rate of \$1 (four shillings) per acre, to be paid in full, or in two annual payments of two shillings per acre.

Timber lands can be leased at nominal rates, and mining licences are granted for gold mining at 5*l.* per annum. Military and naval officers are entitled to free grants of land.

SOIL AND AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITIES.—The Hon. H. L. Langevin, C.B., says "As an agricultural country, British Columbia has been much under-estimated. The tracts of arable land are of very great extent. A portion of these, however, require artificial irrigation. This is easy to be obtained, and not expensive; and lands so irrigated are of very great fertility. Land 1,700 above the level of the sea, thus irrigated, yielded forty bushels of wheat per acre."

On Vancouver Island and the lower Fraser, beautiful open prairies occur amidst the magnificent forests, and these tracts are of wonderful fertility, the rich deep black soil producing astonishing crops of turnips, beets, and other roots. No irrigation is required west of the Cascades, and everything that is grown in Great Britain can be grown to advantage there; garden produce fetches large prices in the towns, hay was worth from 3*l.* to 4*l.* a ton last year, and plenty of land along the Fraser can be pre-empted for wild hay. As potatoes and other farm products are imported largely from the United States in spite of a customs duty, and the cost of freight, it is very evident that a great opening exists in the province for a few farmers who understand their business. At present, farmers appear to look upon a potato patch as if it were a gold mine, and the potatoes gold nuggets, and accordingly want to make their fortunes out of a few hundredweight. A really good farmer, with a capital of 1,000*l.*, could make a fortune in five years, by taking a cleared prairie farm near one of the towns, and using American agricultural machinery to reduce the cost of labour, which is the one great expense in British Columbia.

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fir, cedar, spruce, elder, and maple; a species of oak is also plentiful on Vancouver Island. The immensity of the forests can hardly be exaggerated, and the stupendous height of the trees, reaching sometimes to 300 feet, must be seen to be believed. For hundreds of miles in the West Cascade region the whole surface of the country is densely wooded. On the tops of the mountains the trees dispute the mastery with the eternal snow. Among the most valuable for lumbering purposes, the celebrated Douglas fir takes the first place. This British Columbian wood is known as "Oregon pine" in commerce, though it is almost exclusively shipped to Great Britain and Australia from Burrard's Inlet and Puget Sound. In 1875 a committee of Lloyd's was formed to enquire into the relative value of the woods used in commerce, and they unanimously decided in favour of the Douglas fir (*Abies Douglasii*) which is extensively found all over the western portion of British Columbia.

Du Ferron, speaking on this subject, says, "The masts and spars of Vancouver (*Abies Douglasii*) are rare and exceptional for dimensions and superior qualities, strength, lightness, absence of knots and other grave vices." There are about fifteen sawmills in the province, and the business is capable of great extension.

GOLD.—The principal industry of the province is still gold mining, and as new mines are being opened at Cassiar every year, and Cariboo continues to give good returns, the prospects are encouraging. Gold exists all over the province, and Lord Dufferin remarks, "As we skirted the banks of the Fraser we were met at every turn by evidences of its extraordinary supplies of fish, but scarcely less frequent were the signs afforded us of the golden treasures it rolls down; nor need any traveller think it strange to see the Indian fisherman hauling out a salmon on to the sands from whence the miner beside him is sifting the sparkling ore. But the signs of mineral wealth which may happen to have attracted my personal attention are as nothing, I understand, to what is exhibited in Cariboo, Cassiar, and along the valley of the Stickeen."

It was the discovery of gold on the Fraser in 1858, and at Cariboo in 1862, that led to the formation of the colony. It is estimated, in the Government report for 1875, that the total estimated yield of gold, from the first discovery in 1858 to 1875, has been \$38,166,970. The yield for 1875 was \$2,474,904; the number of miners employed was 2,024, and the average yearly earnings per man \$1,222 (251*l*. English) being the highest average earnings known.

The route to the mines of Cassiar is by steamer from Victoria to Fort Wrangel, thence up the Stickeen river by steamer, and the remainder of the journey by trail; McDames, Deases, and Thibert's Creeks are the principal mining centres, but fresh discoveries have been made on branches of the Deloivre, chief among which is Sayyee Creek.

There can be no doubt of the importance and value of the district of Cassiar as a mining field, which will probably occupy a foremost place in the mining annals of the province for many years to come.

The late Mr. J. H. Sullivan, Gold Commissioner at Cassiar, estimated the population at 1,280, of whom about 1,000 were whites. The following is a list of the prices current in Laketon, Cassiar, September 25, 1875:—

	\$	cts.	s.	d.
Flour per lb.	25		1	0
Beans	25		1	0
Bacon	50		2	0
Beef	35		1	5½
Sugar	45		1	10½
Tea	1.25		5	0
Dried Fruit	50		2	0
Shovels, each	3.50		14	0
Axes	4.50		18	0
Tobacco, per lb.	1.50		6	0
Brandy, per gallon	8.00		32	0
Gum boots (indiarubber)	11.50		46	0

Packing rates from Telegraph Creek to

Dease Lake, per lb. 15 7½

There were no idle men in Cassiar, all who understood mining, finding ready employment.

The area of this gold-field, thus far developed, is at least three hundred miles square.

The route to Cariboo is by steamer from Victoria to New Westminster, thence by steamer to Yale at the head of navigation on the Fraser, thence by stage coach to Barkerville, Cariboo. Lightning Creek occupies the first place as a mining ground; Williams Creek and the Keithley Division come next in importance.

The following are the prices current for this district according to the latest returns:—

	\$	cts.	£	s.	d.
Wages; Labourers, per day	5.00		1	0	0
Ditto Mechanics	7.00		1	8	0
Flour per lb.	8		0	0	4
Beans	15		0	0	7½
Bacon	35		0	1	5½
Tea	1.00		0	4	0
Sugar	33½		0	1	5
Tobacco	1.50		0	6	0
Butter	60		0	2	6
Cheese	50		0	2	0
Gum boots per pair	8.00		1	12	0
Candles per lb.	50		0	2	0
Soap	40		0	1	8
Beef	12½		0	0	6
Nails	25		0	1	0
Salt	20		0	0	10
Brandy per bottle	1.75		0	7	0

The rate of freight from Yale to Barkerville averages from 7½ to 8 cents (4d.) per pound in the spring, and 6d. in the fall. It must be borne in mind, that although the rates of wages are very high at the mines, yet the price of provisions, etc., is in proportion, and but little work can be done in the winter.

No paying gold quartz has as yet been worked in British Columbia, but we have seen specimens from Cariboo which look well, and there is but little doubt that after the construction of the Pacific Railway through the province, improved heavy machinery will be easily conveyed to the mines, and the output of gold will be largely increased.

SILVER.—Valuable leads of silver ore exist in several parts, but notably near Hope on the Fraser, where the Eureka mine is situated; it is not working at present, owing to the company being in course of reorganisation, but a quantity of ore has been shipped to San Francisco, and the assay is very favourable.

COPPER, IRON, AND LEAD.—Copper leads exists near Sanich, and at other spots on Vancouver Island, and we have seen fine specimens of ore from Howe Sound and Pitt Lake; want of capital, and the dearness of skilled labour, have, up to the present, stood in the way of working this and the other minerals which abound in the province. On Texada Island, a mountain of iron ore exists, and the earth is so impregnated with iron that the compass is sensibly affected. Lead is found in several localities.

We heard of the discovery of a vast bed of cinnabar, a few months back, but it is not yet tested. There is no doubt but that the riches of the mineral wealth of the province cannot be over-estimated.

COAL.—Near Nanaimo, several mines have been profitably worked for many years, and fresh seams are being constantly discovered. The output of the Vancouver Coal Company and the Wellington Colliery during 1874 was 81,547 tons, and during 1875 110,146 tons, showing an increase of 28,598 tons.

The earnings of the miners are from 10s. to 20s. per day; the number of miners employed at Nanaimo and neighbourhood, not including the hands employed working by the miners, amounts to 623 men—396 whites, 176 Chinese, and 51 Indians.

Coal exists on Baynes Sound, and one mine is in active operation, a railway has been built, a distance of three miles from the pit's mouth to the sea, and a sawmill has been erected; we understand that coal is now being shipped of good quality. At Burrard Inlet and other points on the mainland croppings of coal have been observed, and we have seen samples of a vein 15 inches thick from the latter locality taken not two miles from the sea.

FISHERIES.—Fish swarm in all the seas, lakes, and rivers. We shall never forget an hour's fishing in the clear waters of an inlet of the Pacific embosomed in the midst of densely wooded mountains. With a most primitive hook, and bait

collected from the mussels which lay thickly on the rocks, we filled a basket of most capacious dimensions with a miscellaneous collection which would have gladdened the hearts of the frequenters of the Brighton Aquarium. Ferocious dog-fish, useful for their oil, delicate-eating rock-cod, whiting, hideous devil-fish, gigantic crabs, ugly bull-heads swelling themselves into preternatural forms, and brilliant sea-dace were a few of the results of our hour's sport.

Salmon are so plentiful that we have seen them sold for 6d. each; sturgeon of 500 pounds weight are not uncommon, and they can be bought for a trifle.

Oolachans, a small fish of a most delicate flavour, run up the rivers twice a year; higher up the coast they are called candle-fish, as being so full of oil; the natives dry them, and burn them as candles.

Whales, halibut, cod, herrings, and numberless other varieties of fish abound.

Oysters are fine in flavour and plentiful; a bucketful can be got for sixpence near the coast.

There are several salmon canning factories on the Fraser, and the quality of the salmon is so good, that the judges at the Philadelphia Exhibition awarded several prizes to the various firms engaged in this industry. There exists a great opening for the profitable employment of capital in this industry, and every information will be given by the writer to persons desirous of investing, on application at the office of the LABOUR NEWS, 15, Russell-street, Covent-garden.

The great resources of British Columbia, as regards fisheries, are almost undeveloped, and except it be that they are known but by a few, we are unable to ascribe the reason.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.—The Dominion Government have surveyed every practicable route for the railway through the province, and construction work will be commenced on the mainland this year; this will initiate a new era of prosperity for British Columbia, and labour will be in full demand. The project of a railway from Victoria to Nanaimo is under consideration by the Government, and preliminary surveys have been made, but at present it is uncertain whether the money supposed to be available for this purpose will be devoted to the railway or to general public works; in whatever manner it is decided, the expenditure of three-quarters of a million of dollars cannot but be beneficial to the province.

The Canadian Pacific Railway will give Great Britain a route to India and China through British territory, 1,000 miles shorter than at present. Mr. Sproat states in his valuable official handbook that "the distance from New York to San Francisco by the Union Pacific Railway is 3,363; but from Montreal to New Westminster (British Columbia) it is only 2,730, or 63 miles in favour of the Canadian line."

The eastern portion of the line is being rapidly pushed forward, and we saw many tons of steel rails lying at Esquimalt

in readiness for the long-promised commencement of work in the west.

COST OF LIVING.—This varies in the different localities, and the rates current at the mines will be found under the heading of GOLD. As a rule, at Victoria and New Westminster, beef is 6d., mutton 8d., bread 2½d., bacon 9d., butter 1s. 8d. per pound; eggs 2s. per dozen, rice 4d., and sugar 6d. per pound. Groceries and clothing are dearer than in England, and meat, fish, and game cheaper. House-rent is about the same as in Great Britain; most of the houses are built of wood; however, several brick stores and private dwellings were being erected last year in the cities, and every year will improve in this respect.

WHO IS WANTED IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.—The farmer with some capital, and not afflicted with "brandy-fever," who makes but a poor living in England, could realise a fortune in the province in five or ten years, and be its own landlord from the commencement. The large and small capitalist who is content with 4 or 5 per cent. interest for his money on English mortgages could obtain 10 to 12 on Columbian mortgages, and the interest paid monthly; after experience in the colony, he could employ his capital at a profit which would be impossible in England.

Farm labourers, carpenters and joiners, blacksmiths and domestic servants—all who *can* work and *will* work, and who will make the best of the discomforts of a new country, remembering the solid advantages that so fully compensate them, will find British Columbia almost what we have heard an eminent judge call it "A paradise for a working man;" and if the epithet "single" applies to such a man, we can quite endorse this enthusiastic opinion from our own observation. A few duly qualified medical men are much wanted up the country.

Clerks and others, although getting good salaries, could not be advised to emigrate, unless sure of an engagement before starting.

ROUTES TO BRITISH COLUMBIA.—The best season to arrive in the province is in the spring, and the best route is by the Atlantic line of steamers from Liverpool, Londonderry, Belfast, or Glasgow to Quebec, thence by rail across the Continent to San Francisco, and from San Francisco to Victoria, British Columbia, by steamer. The journey is generally performed in about three weeks, unless the traveller stops at any town *en route*.

The cost is at present about 36*l.* first-class through fare to Victoria, exclusive of hotels, and 18*l.* third-class.

In case of need the emigrant can apply to the Canadian emigration officials whilst on the journey through Canada. The other ways of reaching British Columbia are by sailing vessel direct, or by steamer, *via* Panama to San Francisco, and thence to Victoria.

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The undermentioned are agents of lines of sailing vessels direct to British Columbia :—

The Hudson's Bay Company, 1, Lime-street, London, E.C. ; Messrs. Anderson, Anderson, and Co., 1, Billiter-court, London, E.C. ; Messrs. G. H. Fletcher and Co., 9 and 12, Exchange Buildings, Liverpool.

The Emigration Commissioner at the Canadian Government offices, in Queen Victoria-street, E.C., will give information to intending emigrants in England, and the Immigration agents at Victoria, New Westminster, British Columbia, will render every assistance on arrival in the province.

GENERAL REMARKS.—The settler in British Columbia will find churches of nearly every denomination, free public schools, public libraries, hospitals, daily papers well conducted, and a people fond of English sports and public amusements. There are no social disadvantages in his way, and he is invited to take a part in the great work of colonial self-government. The highest offices are open to anyone who has secured the confidence of his fellow-citizens. The climate is very similar to that of England, but with a finer summer, and the soil will grow anything that is raised in Great Britain. *It is easier to make a living in British Columbia than in any other country in the world.* If a man can be happy and contented in England let him remain ; but if he be disposed to try his fortune in a new country, let him read the "Pioneer Papers," balance the advantages and disadvantages of the various colonies, and I think his decision will be in favour of British Columbia.

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